

BY JAMN

Stamp- (NO) WAR

Via Pacis

Sept.-Oct. 1990

vol. 14 no. 3



# THE WORKER STANCE

## AND THE GAS FAST

by Carol Pilgrim and Corey Hardin

By now there are few people who are unaware of the August 2 invasion of the tiny Gulf state of Kuwait by its much larger neighbor Iraq. In response, our government has set into motion the largest U.S. troop deployment since the Vietnam war. Catholic Workers have always opposed the use of military violence to settle international disputes, however, in this instance our opposition to the conduct of nations on both sides goes beyond traditional pacifist grounds. The actions of the various armies involved, our own as well as Saddam Hussein's, have been motivated solely by greed and self interest.

The invasion of Kuwait was indeed an act of "naked aggression" carried out by a ruthless dictator. But the fact remains, there have been 'naked aggressions' aplenty in recent history, no small number committed by the United States government: Nicaragua in 1926-1933, Cuba in 1898, the Philippines from 1899-1902, Haiti from 1915-1934, the Dominican Republic in 1916-1924, Cuba again in 1961, Vietnam from 1964-1973, Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989. Add to this list the 'cloaked' aggressions in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Indonesia in 1957, Chile in 1973, Angola from 1975-1990, and Nicaragua from 1981-1990 and our President's pretensions to moral indignation begin to ring hollow. There is no doubt that if, as was said in an op-ed in the Des Moines Register, the major export of Kuwait had been radishes, there would not be 200,000 U.S. troops in the Gulf. Nothing elicits a quicker response from the industrial world than a threat to our stranglehold on the world's resources. Saddam Hussein attempted to secure unto himself a disproportionate share of natural resources--the same share we have long sought to secure unto ourselves. He is no better than us; we are no better than him.

The situation in the Persian Gulf is unstable and hard to predict, what is abundantly clear, however, is that should the United States fight and win a gulf war, only small segments of the world population will have gained much of anything. It is no accident that our allies in the Arab world are the oil-rich gulf states, beneficiaries of arbitrary borders drawn by Western colonial powers. Our enemies in the region, Jordan, Syria, Iran, Palestine, are those who have been on the losing end of the colonial bargain. The West has drawn a map which created oil rich and oil deficient nations and then picked the oil rich nations as its allies in hopes of attaining some control over the world's natural resources. Moreover, it is the poor in both the Middle East and at home who will suffer most in a war. The chemical weapons likely to be used will inflict little damage on well-protected troops. Civilians in Kuwait or Iraq, or Asians in squalid refugee camps along Iraq's borders will suffer the most casualties. The Israeli government has in place

## AROUND THE HOUSE

by Kay Meyer and Corey Hardin

### OUR NEW HOUSE

It's true, we have moved into the new house which we have named Bishop Dingman house. It's a beautiful house both in appearance and grace. The wooden floors and widow and door framing that Jim Harrington so laboriously saved from other ancient houses doomed for the dozer gives the house a feeling of secure continuity, it feels like home is a comment we've heard several times, and late at night when things have quieted down, as you listen to the kids get settled in for the night, you can easily find yourself thinking the same thing, this is home, a very, very nice home.

We moved into the new house the first week of June. Actually, the very day we moved in, with fresh linens on the beds, and the table set with new table settings, was the same day that Wendy, Katie, Luke Bobbit, and Jim Harrington left for Mexico with all of the Bejorquez family. They were in Mexico 3 months staying in the home village of the Bejorquez family. They did some repair work on some of the houses in the village, and they built an outhouse, but most of the time was spent making tortillas, washing, and gathering wood. Wendy came back looking very happy, already planning her next visit.

Father Frank is nearing the end of his six-month sentence for the line-crossing at the SAC base. He has been transferred to a county jail in South Dakota, and is doing as well as can be expected. He will be released on Oct 28.

On November 4th we are planning to finally hold the big opening celebration of Dingman House. The newly released Frank will be here to say mass, bless the house and celebrate the opening of Bishop Dingman House as well as his own homecoming. Things will get started at 4:00 p.m. and finish up around 7:00 p.m. We hope to see everyone there.

Norman has recently returned from the International Catholic Worker Gathering in Denver, Colorado. All told, about 80 folks from houses all over attended. Old friends of ours like Brian Terrell from Strangers and Guests in Moloy were there. Brian was able to stop by the Dingman House for a few hours on his way out West, and we all had a nice visit. Norman is already making plans to attend the Mid-West gathering is Sugar Creek at the beginning of October.



# A WOMAN'S NIGHTMARE

by Carol Pilgrim

I'm sure that the story which appeared in the Des Moines Register on Friday, Aug. 31, concerning the woman who was raped by a truck driver while hitchhiking made many people angry. Rape is every woman's nightmare. A woman spends every moment with the knowledge that her gender has marked her as a potential victim of a violent sexual assault.

I found out about the incident about twelve hours earlier than most people when I came to the Catholic Worker House, where I both live and work, and asked Kay, the staff person working that evening, why she had agreed to take in a new couple despite the fact that we were full. Kay related the story which appeared in the Register the next morning, with one additional fact: when the woman from victim's services called First Call For Help, a 24 hour United Way funded crisis line, to find housing for Sue & Mark (I've changed their names) the county after hours worker suggested that if the two houses in Des Moines that provide temporary shelter for couples were full (at the time, one of these houses, Nazareth House, was closed) the couple get split up--send the man to the Bethel Mission and the woman to the Beacon of Life.

I have never been homeless. I can only imagine the desperation a person must feel being without a home. After living and working with homeless people for the last year I only know it must add immeasurably to the desperation to be denied even the security of being with someone you love.

Although Bill Pritmeyer, the director of General Relief, later assured me that it is not the county's policy to split up couples, he admitted realizing there seemed to be some general misunderstanding on the part of the after hours duty workers which was resulting in their refusal to shelter couples together. If all private shelters are full, the after hours worker is supposed to provide shelter for people during hours General Relief is closed. That family or couple then should receive assistance from General Relief the next morning. If there is a "general misunderstanding" on the part of the after hours workers the couple or family being turned down has no way to appeal the decision. The General Relief office, where an appeal can be made, is closed, which was, if you remember the reason the position of after hours worker was created in the first place.

One evening an after hours worker confided in me--although it's the easiest thing in the world for me to sign a voucher to put someone up in a hotel, if I do, I hear about it in the morning, especially if it's warm and they could easily sleep outside.

The truth is, when presented with splitting up as the final option, most couples will choose an unspoken option: spending the night in an abandoned house, in the car, or under a bridge. Yet, there is something in us,

when we 'advocate' for homeless people, that makes us continually present this option as if it is realistic, as if it is humane. Perhaps we continue to do so because we too are desperate, desperate to believe that we can offer something, even if our offering is only an illusion. Perhaps it is because we are unwilling to look a person in the eyes and admit to him or her that our society, that we, have deemed them to be less than human..

I know that at the Catholic Worker House, if our daily routine has not left us void of all energy, we struggle to create a realistic option. That's what Kay did Thursday night when she decided to take in Sue and Mark --room or no room. She took them to her own house, one of the Catholic Worker's two long term houses which she shares with our permanent guests, and let them sleep on her living room floor.

They were met the next morning by a worker from Victim's Services who accompanied them to Broadlawn Medical Center. Sue is six months pregnant, and needed to undergo a battery of tests.

The two returned from an exhausting day of medical testing just before dinner, asking permission to eat and take a shower. The worker from Victim's Services had arranged to have the State police buy them a bus ticket out of town that evening. Corey offered to drive them to the bus station.

With a few hours before the bus came I got my first chance to talk to Sue and Mark. I learned the circumstances leading up to the rape. They had decided to go to Cheyenne, where Mark had lived previously with his former wife, to find better work, their car had broken down in Illinois, they decided to hitch hike the rest of the way to Cheyenne. I learned that what scared Sue most was the possibility that her baby was harmed; that what angered her most was that the man who raped her was still free.

I learned her husband, who had been both a police officer and a soldier, had taught her self-defense techniques, none of which could have protected her. I learned that she was fighting to overcome the subconscious message that our society, that we willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, still broadcasts--rape is a woman's fault. Finally, I learned that although she intends to return to Des Moines to pursue a court case, what she wanted most that Friday night was to leave town, find someplace she might be able to feel safe, and begin to call it home.

Before we left for the bus station Mark called the State Patrol and arranged for them to meet us there. We got to the station and waited for an officer to arrive to buy the ticket.

After about 10 minutes a Greyhound employee called their names over the intercom. Mark went to the counter

and returned minutes later yelling they won't do it. They say we don't qualify; ify because the money is for people who break down in the house. Angry and frustrated, we returned to the Catholic Worker House.

Getting in the car, Mark commented well at least I like you guys. I mean at least we're not trapped here with people we hate. At that moment I couldn't help but think back at the comment he had made about the T-shirt I was wearing in the bus station. The shirt reads "stop the arms ships stop the war." The shirt is a product of Nuremburg actions, a group vigil and physically blocking trains at Concord Naval Weapons Station. The trains are transporting weapons destined for Central America. Blocking the train is an act of disobedience. Mark had commented that'll put people like me out of business, referring to his experience in the military. We laughingly said that people like me put people like in business, the business of carting off to jail.

As I sit here now I'm trying to comprehend the series of tragic events which forced us together, provided opportunity for us to become friends and led us to chuckle over the image of him arresting me.

Looking at the shirt now, I note it displays a quote from Brian Wilentz, a Vietnam vet who was run over by a train at Concord suffering the loss of his legs while blocking a train in an attempt to serve the people in Central America. The quote reads "...We are worth more--they are not worth it." I believe that statement to be true. Corey and I vowed to do everything we could to get them to Cheyenne.

We spent that evening making phone calls trying to raise money or get a voucher from the county to provide a voucher. This year has finally ended up with Martha W. as our county supervisor, home number. Corey called her and she agreed to the trials Sue and Mark experienced. She agreed to use her influence and help. Later that evening we received a call from Peterson, county Human Services Director, to set up a meeting the next morning between Sue and Bill Pritmeyer. Bill gave them a voucher for two bus tickets to Cheyenne.

An interesting side note, just to nothing goes as planned, when we arrived in the bus station we discovered that the voucher had been written for two dollars less than the price of two one-way tickets. Sue and Mark spent their last hour in Des Moines begging for small change to leave town.

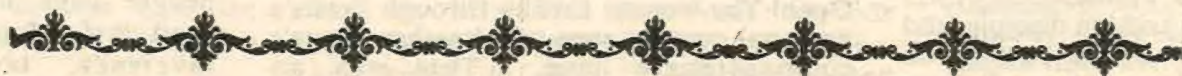




## Mitch Snyder 1943 - 1990



It was quite a shock to learn of Mitch Snyder's suicide. Mitch's life was an inspiration to all of us at the Worker. Many of us are here now directly as a result of his work. Wendy came to Des Moines directly from CCNV in Washington. Carol and Corey first came into contact with the Worker House through a Grinnell student group, formed in response to a plea Mitch made during a speech at Grinnell. In the weeks since his death we have seen articles like this one in newsletters and newspapers of shelters and hospitality houses across the country. Each containing the story of how Mitch inspired them, started their house, or helped out at a difficult time. That is the best testament to the overwhelming impact he had. Goodbye Mitch. The world is a better place for your having been in it.



## around the house

We want to thank all the folks who provided us with fans to keep cool this summer. We were able to provide every room in the house with a new fan. Luckily it looks like the hot weather is over now. At the Catholic Worker the coming of fall has also traditionally meant the coming of financial crisis. This year has proved no different. We are now looking towards winter with a nearly empty bank account and bills piling up.

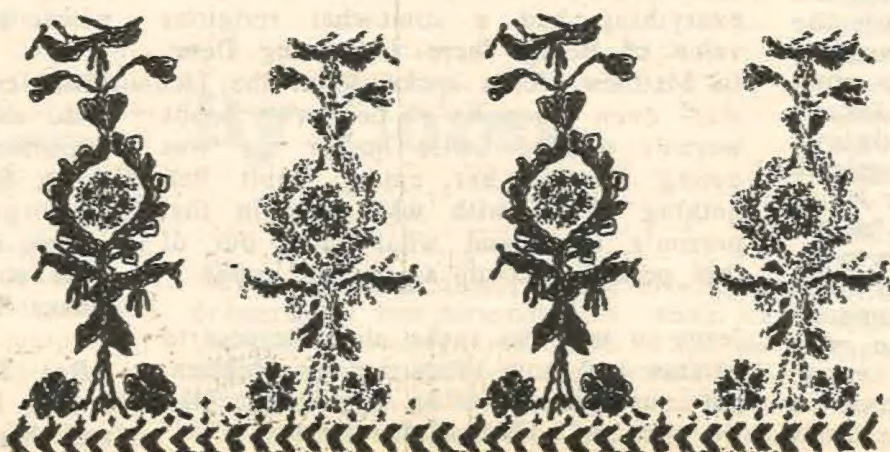
The house is filled to the brim. Last month we had two families one with five children and the other with six. With the return of Luke and Katie Bobbitt and Julius getting back from a summer spent with relatives, the house was literally overflowing with children. There is no way we could have survived without Margaret.

We also owe a big thanks to Bill Cullen, Christen Fallon, Dennis McLaughlin, and the Grinnell students, who returned to school and began their Saturday trips to Des Moines right away. It would be nearly impossible to keep the house staffed without these people. Volunteers remain one of our critical needs.

After months of struggling to find alternative methods of countering the growing drug problem in our neighborhood we finally hit on to something exciting. Last month on August 24, we held our first "Street Live Nite." The Catholic Worker along with other people who provide social services in the Des Moines area or who are simply concerned about our government's approach to the drug

problem gathered from 9 p.m. to midnight in the Salvation Army park on Seventh St. to provide food and build relationships with the drug dealers and prostitutes who live in our neighborhood. The event also featured the music of DJs Rev and Smooth. The next "Street Life Nite" is September 28th. It won't be the last. We'd like to extend a special thanks to Alan Spencer for his help and inspiration in this project.

Finally, just a quick reminder that we are available to make presentations about our work to any group. Our outreach efforts fell off a little during the summer, but we always enjoy the chance to get out and talk to folks, so if you belong to a group you would like us to speak to, please give us a call at 243-0765.





ed. note- Our dear friend Father Frank Cordaro is currently in the fourth month of a six month jail term for acts of civil disobedience at the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command, just outside of Omaha, Nebraska. Frank has been keeping in touch with his parishers by mailing reflections on each week's scripture. Below is an excerpt from one of Frank's letters as well as some of our thoughts on the same Biblical passage.

## By Frank-

August 19, 1990  
20th Sunday Ordinary Time

"It Isn't Right To Take The Children's Food And Throw It To The Dogs" Matt. 15:26

In this weeks Gospel, Jesus appears out of character, harsh and mean spirited towards the Canaanite women in the story. Like the story of the feeding of the multitudes we read a couple of weeks ago, this is another story occasion in Matthew's Gospel when events and people push Jesus to define and reveal more clearly (and in the case of the Canaanite women more broadly) his divine mission.

After his walking on the water, Jesus and his disciples landed in the Gennersaret. Jesus immediately began to heal all who came to him (14:34-36). Jesus's fame was now attracting the interests of the authorities in Jerusalem. Some Pharisees and scribes from the capitol city were sent to Gennnesaret to check out Jesus. These Pharisees and scribes approached Jesus and asked him why he and his disciples did not wash their hands before eating as prescribed by law. Jesus ignored their questions and directly called them "hypocrites" for disobeying "God's

command and following (their) own teachings." Jesus accused the Pharisees and scribes of instructing people to neglect the care of their elderly parents in order to pay for the upkeep of the temple. (15:1-9)

Jesus then called a crowd together and in one sentence disclaimed all the purity laws regarding food, "It's not what goes into a persons mouth that makes them ritually unclean; rather, what comes out of it makes them unclean." The disciples came up to Jesus and told him he was upsetting these important leaders from Jerusalem. Perhaps it's not a wise thing to do? Jesus told them not to worry about them, "They are blind leaders of the blind." he said. Peter asked Jesus to explain himself about the ritual purity laws regarding unclean foods. Jesus told his disciples that the only evil comes from the heart. Nothing a person eats has anything to do with what is spiritually clean or unclean. In this manner Jesus declared all ritual purity laws regarding food bogus. (15: 10-20).

As we begin this weeks Gospel we find Jesus on the run. He and his disciples get out Gennesaret, leaving behind the important though blind Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem. They enter into the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. These were pagan territories. There were few if any Jews living in this area. Clearly Jesus was trying to get away from the confrontation he had started with the Pharisees and the scribes from Jerusalem in Gennesaret. This confrontation must have been weighing heavily on Jesus's mind. He was now in a struggle directly with the leaders of the nation. A struggle in which the stakes were very high for Jesus. All of Jesus's attention was on the "people of Israel". He and his disciples were in the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon for strategic reasons. When the Canaanite women approached Jesus, he was completely caught off guard. The woman must have loved her daughter very much, a love that knew no boundaries. She broke

all the social and religious rules of behavior to get Jesus to help her demon possessed daughter. In the first place, she was a Canaanite. The Canaanites were the old pagan religion of the area. It was the same pagan religion that Jews had been fighting and competing with for centuries. No Jew or Canaanite in Jesus's time would have anything to do with each other. Secondly, she was a woman. In Jesus's time a woman would not make such a bold and public gesture towards a strange man. Her aggressive approach to Jesus was a major violation of the common and accepted social and religious mores of the time.

Apparently Jesus's reputation as a healer and his ability to cast out demons went beyond his Jewish constituency. In her approach to Jesus the Canaanite woman showed the greatest respect and honor for Jesus addressing him as "Son of David," a title her own people would have cringed at. She loudly begged for mercy for her possessed daughter. At first Jesus ignored her. Yet, she begged all the louder. The disciples went to Jesus telling him to send her away. She was making a public spectacle of herself.

Jesus's mind was still on his parochial concerns, his conflict with the Pharisees and scribes. He told his disciples his mission was with his own people. Then the woman breaks through the circle of men and falls at Jesus's feet. "Help me, sir," she cried. She broke the personal comfort zone of Jesus and the disciples. Jesus reply was quick and mean spirited, "It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." The woman didn't lose her cool. No personal insult, even from Jesus, was going to deter her from her goal. She uses Jesus own words to make her point. "That's true sir," she answers "but even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from the master's table."

Ouch! The woman breaks through Jesus's personal comfort zone and touches Jesus's compassionate zone. This was an important defining moment for Jesus. The woman's great love for her daughter and her bold gesture toward Jesus pushed Jesus to a new level of divine revelation. How could Jesus chastise the Pharisees and the Scribes for putting self serving limits and restrictions on how the law of Moses must be obeyed when he, himself was setting limits and restrictions on his Fathers healing love? Jesus expanded his own self understanding on the spot. The Canaanite woman led Jesus to understand his Father's love to be unconditional, unlimited and open to anyone of good faith.

Once again in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus's compassionate response helps define and reveal more of his true divine self and mission. Jesus tells the women she has great faith. He told her, her daughter was healed that very moment.

## By Norman-

Just got done reading Matthew 15. Its an interesting chapter in Matthew. It seems to me that Jesus had a lot more than the Pharisees, the Scribes, the People, and the Disciples to deal with, but also traditions. I guess in Jesus's day almost everything that people did had some religious value to it, somewhat like our American Indians before the white man came -- everything had a somewhat religious value of Being There and Being Done. In Matthew, Jesus spoke about the fact that even though a person's hands weren't washed while he or she was eating his or her eating habit had nothing to do with what was in that person's mind and what came out of that person's mouth as spoken words.

Jesus to me also spoke about respect to parents and how often we, as children, put our parents aside sometimes, like we often do with God, the Creator.

A lot of times we find ourselves wanting to be near our parent we're in trouble or we just miss them and sometimes we're afraid to speak to them. There are many reasons why

Then Jesus quoted Isaiah saying, "people pays me lip service. but their heart is far from me. They do me reverence, making dogmas out of human precepts." It seems to me we've all been playing in this sand too long and we need to start to clean up our act, and world. Most of all we need our parents--we need God.

You see I believe no matter how old we are and no matter how modern we think we are, we're still children playing silly games, like our ancestors the cavemen, like Adam and Eve, we need God.

Thank You,  
Norman

## By Carol-

At the beginning of Matthew 15 Pharisees confront Jesus, accusing him of failing to follow the ancient traditions. Jesus responds that the Pharisees, though following traditions, have failed to follow the true spirit of God's commandments. quotes for them Isaiah, "This people honoureth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain they worship me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Pharisees, for all their wealth and power are not qualified to teach.

Jesus calls the crowd to gather around him, explaining to them that what is important is not the appearance of things, but the thing itself. "It is not what goes into a man's mouth that makes him common or unclean. It is what comes out of a man's mouth that makes him unclean."

After Jesus finishes speaking to the crowd, his disciples come to him. They are shocked by his chastisement of







and ourselves  
parent when  
ust miss them  
d to speak to  
easons why.

saying, "This  
vice. but their  
do me empty  
mas out of  
ns to me that  
this sand box  
start to clean  
Most of all we  
God.

er how old we  
modern we may  
still children  
our ancestors  
and Eve. We

Matthew 15 the  
accusing him  
the ancient  
nds that the  
llowing the  
o follow the  
mandments. He  
"This people  
lips; But their  
ut in vain de  
hing as their  
of men.' The  
wealth and  
o teach.

gather around  
that what is  
pearance of  
f. "It is not  
s mouth that  
unclean. It is  
u's mouth that

aking to the  
to him. They  
sement of the

Pharisees. The Pharisees are respected and powerful. After Jesus calms and reassures the men, the disciples realize that they have failed to grasp Jesus's message. Perhaps they had fallen into the very trap Jesus' message warns us of, a preoccupation with the appearance of things, in this case the appearance of the Pharisees as those deserving reverence.

Jesus explains to the men that it what is in a man's heart and mind, that which comes out of a man's mouth, which makes him unclean.

Jesus and his disciples then leave the place of the Pharisees and retire to Tyre and Sidon. There, they are approached by a Canaanite woman. The woman is everything the Pharisees are not. She is a woman, a pagan, and she is desperately in need of assistance. She calls out, "Lord, son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is in a terrible state -- a devil has got into her!" Apparently the woman has heard of Jesus's healing abilities, and her love for her daughter has forced her to extremes.

The woman, and here I think it is important to note that the person who approaches Jesus is a woman, and the only woman in this story, lies outside of Jesus's tradition. She represents the marginalized, the disinherited, the "other."

It is precisely her status as the other which enables her to teach Jesus. This is a strange notion--that it is those who our society, who we brand as "other," who by virtue of being the "other," of being outside that which we would normally be exposed to, have the power to teach us. It is a notion as a Catholic Worker, I have chosen to embrace.

At the beginning of Chapter 15, Jesus shares with us a lesson. He tells us it is not following tradition which makes us just. In fact, tradition can limit us. He asks the Pharisees, "Why do you break God's commandments through your tradition." I think that when we remain trapped inside a tradition, a set of cultural values and assumptions, everything we see or hear comes to us filtered through that tradition. He tells his disciples that the Pharisees, who by

all accounts appear righteous, are "blind guides." And he tells us "when one blind man leads another blind man they will both fall into the ditch."

Although Jesus shares this lesson with us I don't think, until he met the Canaanite woman, he had truly learned it himself. I think that Jesus too was unable to escape his cultural background.

Jesus was caught within a tradition which assigned everything a positive or negative value. The woman who approached him received all negatives. She was not a man, she was not of the same nationality, she believed in a different god, and, by approaching Jesus unasked crying and begging, she was not following the rules.

I admire this Canaanite woman very much. She herself had broken tradition by going beyond her own culture's prescribed bounds. In addition to the fact that she was a woman approaching a group of strange men, inasmuch as the woman assumed a marginalized position with Jesus's tradition Jesus would have been assigned a marginalized position within hers. Breaking tradition and doing what your culture has taught you not to do is extremely difficult.

Her love for her daughter, interestingly another woman, gives her the strength to break through cultural boundaries. Even when she is first turned away she refuses to give up and retreat to the security of her own culture and people. Again she begs for help. This time Jesus responds with a cutting insult, "It is not right, you know, to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Here she issues a challenge, a challenge to Jesus to do as she has done and break through his cultural system which designates her as a mass of unworthiness and to accept her as a human. By doing so he can help her, and he can help himself.

She comes to Jesus forcefully teaching and demanding Jesus learn from her. She insists that he learn to recognize her as worthy of help, as worthy of the same gifts he bestows on his "lost sheep." She teaches him that although everything in his tradition condemns her as unworthy she is not without value, and in her insistence she both demands that Jesus live his own teachings and makes it possible for him to do so.

## By Carla-

It doesn't matter what faith you are, or if you are a man or woman, as long as you have faith in the Lord. Jesus will help you if you have faith. It is not right that some should go hungry while others have so much that their dogs eat better than most people.

## By Corey-

What I see in this passage is shaped primarily by two personal facts., which for the sake of honesty I will share. First, my only in depth encounter, aside from a brief membership in an Episcopalian church as a very small child, with Christianity has

been here at the Worker. Second, I am not a Christian. This latter fact unavoidably complicates my interactions with the Catholic Worker tradition. Just as Frank took pains to define the historical context in which Jesus met the Canaanite woman, I take these pains to explain what I feel is the context from which I write. As in the story, this context deeply affects meaning. I experience the Catholic Worker somewhat from the outside. Because I can not profess to believe in some of the things upon which the Worker is based, I am a little separated from it. Every time I read an article dealing with the Worker movement in which Dorothy Day is cited in order to define what the worker believes, particular if the definition is overtly Christian, I am a little bit offended. This is obviously an unjust reaction on my part. The Worker is Christian, and it is Catholic. It can't, nor should it, be anything else.

I think the source of this reaction is valid though. Our culture is historically Christian. Sadly, since an alarmingly short period of time after the death of Christ, Christian churches, cultures and nations have become intolerant, even germicidal. The effect of this legacy is that for non-Christians, any validation or articulation of that tradition can be a painful reminder of injustice. These are harsh words, but I do not mean them as accusations. Certainly, Christians are not the worlds only oppressors. I am a white male. My gender and my race are both rightly accused of oppressions too numerable to list. I share in this guilt as Christians share in the guilt of their tradition.

U.S. Calvary Gen. Winfield Scott is my ancestor. Gen. Scott led the forced removal of the Cherokee Nation, from its territory in what the Whites called Georgia. This removal led to deaths of hundreds of Indians, it was nothing short of mass murder. The fact is that our cultural values have not changed that much since Gen. Scott's day. We value assertiveness, aggressiveness, loyalty, personal honor. All traits which Gen. Scott could be said to possess as he mounted his horse, assembled his men, and carried out the orders of his commander-and-chief, the democratically elected Andrew Jackson. All of these are also traits which my parents and others hope for their sons to possess. There is no reason to expect that my exercising of these valued characteristics would result in anything other than injustice only quantitatively different. My very acting out of the identity handed down to me by my culture and my parents can be oppressive.

This is what, I think, Christians must realize. The present world order is one in which Christianity, the religion of the West, is the religion of the oppressor. As I must accept the legacy of Gen. Scott, Christians must accept the legacy of the witch-hunters, and the conquistadors. As the oppressors it is we who must sacrifice and alter our behavior to suit those we have hurt. This, I think, is the source of my admittedly unfair reaction to Christian characterization of the Worker. The mere act of calling something Christian, or quoting the bible, or the Pope can be offensive. Just as the mere act of being a white male, or acting like a white male, can be offensive.

These feelings, I'm sure, have colored my reading of the passage. There is nothing I can do about that except to be as honest as I can about my biases. Having done that, let me now offer some thoughts on the passage from Matthew. If my interpretations are offensive I can only say, as I have heard Frank say many times, that they are offered humbly, in a spirit of open-mindedness, love, and honest communication.

I think of the passage (and here I no doubt reflect my own biases) as a sort of lesson on the personal growth possible when the oppressor is mature enough to recognize the oppression and learn from the 'other'.



# HELP!

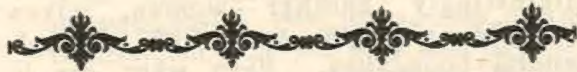
by Corey Hardin

As the summer draws to a close we find our financial situation increasingly desperate. With property taxes looming less than a month away, we literally don't have enough money to meet routine expenses.

Our work is supported by a surprisingly small number of friends, and we are certain that these seasonal crises become repetitive for you just as quickly as they do for us. It is unfortunately the case that we see few ways to cut expenses and many needs go unmet due to lack of money. We run our three houses of hospitality on roughly \$24,000 dollars a year. In keeping with Catholic Worker tradition none of our community members /staff receive any salary, so this money goes directly to meet direct expenses such as property taxes, utilities, telephone, gas, car repair, and house and yard maintenance. By foregoing any paid staff, and with the help of food donations we are able to feed, house, and advocate for 60+ people at any one time. In addition, meals at our house are open to anyone who wishes to come in and this can add 10-15 people to an already crowded dining room. The lions share of the donations needed to accomplish these tasks is given to us by friends over the holiday season. By August this much appreciated boost is long since spent and we are thus faced each year at this time with the need to make a special appeal in order to pay property taxes, as well as regular monthly expenses.

We had hoped, this summer, to make some long delayed physical improvements. The heavy traffic (in both people and cars) in front of our food store makes growing impossible. As a result, the whole area is composed of bare dirt which turns into six inches of impassable mud with each rain in the summer and every thaw in the winter. A sidewalk and a ground cover of woodchips would solve the problem and greatly improve the appearance of the backyard at Lazarus House, but we can not afford the cement for the sidewalk or railroad ties to contain the woodchips. Since Dingman House was finished we have trying to make repairs at Lazarus, and Ligutti. Lazarus has been much improved and we want to turn our attention to Ligutti House as soon as we find the money.

So here we are heading into fall broke once again. Catholic Workers have never accepted government or foundation monies, so we have no recourse but to appeal to the community. Our need is great, won't you please help?



## needs

money  
volunteers  
dry beans  
first aid supplies  
Shampoo  
cleaning supplies  
Tomato products  
Sheets and towels  
cooking oil  
toilet paper  
eggs  
breakfast cereal



## WHO WE ARE

The Catholic Worker is a group of individuals living together in community and working together in pursuit of common goals of peace and justice. In our life together we are trying to live out the Biblical mandate to love one another, and so our houses are open to anyone in need, to stay on a temporary or occasionally a longterm basis.

The Catholic Worker is not a tax exempt organization. Members work as unpaid volunteers, receiving only room and board for our work. We neither seek nor accept government or foundation moneys of any kind, choosing to depend on gifts from our extended community who give at a personal sacrifice. In our refusal to conform to organizational structures, we affirm the responsibility of all to assume personal responsibility for those in need and for the problems facing us all in the world. We invite all to join us in whatever way you can.

## NORMAN'S WHEREABOUTS

Each one of us in one way or another has someone that sort of keeps us going in what we're doing. I have three someones, or at least I used to have three until Mitch Snyder died. He taught me a lot about not giving up on the poor and the needy. I recall the two times that I heard Mitch speak in Iowa. The first was at the student center at Grinnell College and the other was here in Des Moines at the American Friends Service Committee. I recall the time that I spent in Washington DC helping out at CCNV while Frank and I were visiting. I did a few things that made me feel good, one of those things was to hand out bag lunches to the people living on the streets of DC at night. Most of the bag lunches I passed out were for the people living in the park across the street from the White House. I spoke to a couple of them. They were happy that there were people like Mitch that care, and they thought it was good for me to help him. They asked a lot about me and I asked a lot about them. It made them feel good that someone was talking to them as people. I am going to miss Mitch Snyder, along with a lot of others who are doing just about the same thing, working with the poor, struggling with and confronting other people's problems, along with their own problems. A lot of times we cater more to other people's problems than we do to our own. I'm not saying a lot of us, just a few of us.

One of the other three people is Frank. Father Frank Cordaro, as he is known by other people. He's been like the brother I never had. Even though he's a priest, he's never really left the Catholic Worker, and I like to say why in my way.

He's a good supporter of the CW. Not only does he support the Catholic Worker in Omaha and Des Moines, but he gets other people into being supporters and activists by talking to them about the issues and letting them think about them, and then to protest against things like the arms race and farm issues. Frank is still doing Hospitality, because a lot of times he would invite me to Logan. That is if I could get away, which for me, at times, is hard to do, until people tell me that I should stay away. I could go on and say more. I said, Frank has been like a big brother I never had.

The third person is anyone that was a part of my life, for being part of my life I want to say that I love you and I thank you.

Norman.



# GAS FAST

Cont.

plans to supply all its 'citizens' with gas masks, there are no plans at all to protect the Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

At home, talk of a peace dividend is effectively ended. The close to one billion dollars a month spent on Operation Desert Shield, an amount which will skyrocket in an actual war, is money stolen from the homeless and the poverty-stricken. All of this suffering to defend a level of consumption which the poor have never been allowed to share.

We believe that the real threat to global security is the continued monopolization of resources by the Western world. The American insistence on a perpetually increasing standard of living breeds instability. As long as we remain addicted to a world order in which some have too little and others too much the constant threat of war will always exist. Therefore,

we feel that the appropriate response to the crisis in the Persian Gulf is a drastic decrease in our level of consumption. Patterns of lesser consumption should then become a permanent way of life.

The Catholic Worker tradition is based on accepting personal responsibility. Beginning Monday, September 24, our community joined with activists from around Des Moines in a "gas fast" until the end of the crisis in the Gulf. The two of us (Corey and Carol) will completely forego the use of any automobile. We will instead rely on bicycling, walking, and riding public transportation. Other peace activists, Ed Fallon, Thomas Taylor, Jackie Umberger, Christain Gholson, Bob Notman-Cook, Don and Veronica Ray, Ron Krieg, and Patty McGee, have pledged to abstain from using cars for numbers of days a month ranging from 15 to 24. We do not view this pledge as an act of martyrdom, rather we believe that with a small amount of creativity and forethought, it is possible to free ourselves of a burdensome dependence on fossil fuels. We do it gladly.

Everyone on the gas fast will wear blue and green arm bands. The blue symbolizes peace and the green symbolizes the environment. We encourage everyone to participate in this fast. For more information please contact us at (515) 243-0765.

## "PEOPLE OF FAITH FOR A NUCLEAR TEST BAN" ACTION ALERT

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1990

Congregations are asked to ring bells on Tuesday, October 2, at 4:00 P.M., and to make an announcement, observe a moment of silence, say a prayer at worship this or next weekend, and print a notice in their bulletin or newsletter. This action marks a test by the U.S. on September 27, only a week after the last U.S. test. Its blast was centered in a shaft 1,000 feet below the surface of Yucca Flat in Area 1 of the Nevada Test Site, 75 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The Department of Energy announced that the test was "successful".

Beyond this action, each of us should take a few moments to extend our thanks and appreciation to Rep. Jim Leach, who successfully introduced an amendment calling on the President to take negotiations for a test ban seriously. We should encourage Leach to continue taking a leadership role on this issue in the future. Correspondence may be directed to: Representative Jim Leach, 1514 Longworth Building, Washington, DC 20515 (phone: 202-225-6576).

### Matthew 15 Cont

Jesus's initial response to the woman is very evocative for me. He, as Frank pointed out, is preoccupied with freshly started battle with the authorities. Preoccupied to the extent of insensitivity. I recognize this condition. I have been in that condition. It is a condition that a male is predisposed to be in. Frank has said that Jesus's mind was own "the people of Israel" I think that his mind was at least partially on himself as a populist leader of the "people of Israel." It is fair to suppose that he got a certain rush off of his righteous confrontation with the authorities. I recall an instance in which a group of college students had come to the house for a discussion about our work. Carol and I were to give the presentation. Well, the absolute worst thing you can do with a white male is to give them a platform and a good reason to speak. I completely cut Carol out of the conversation in my rush pontificate on class structure. I was so preoccupied with my 'righteous message' that I insulted Carol by not allowing her to get a word in edgewise. It was almost as insulting to her as if I'd said "It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

So Jesus has done this (what I consider) very male thing. He has tried to brush her off and focus on his own doings. Yet the woman persists, and her persistence pays off. Jesus says to her that she has great faith and that her daughter is healed.

This verse in Matthew could be read as simply meaning that anyone can convert to Christianity regardless of background, a sort of foreshadowing of the first Council of Jerusalem's decision to admit uncircumcised Gentiles to the church. However, I think there is more here. The woman is 'the other'. She is a woman in a time and place which did not value women. She is a Canaanite, her people were hated by the Israelites. To a Jew she would appear to be worthless, to have nothing of value to offer, certainly not important considering the impending clash over the fate of the people of Israel. Yet she, not any of the male, Jewish disciples, is the one with the capacity to move Jesus towards his divine nature. Moreover, her capacity to do so depends upon her willingness to liberate herself from the social norms of her time. By approaching a group of strange men, which would have been forbidden, by approaching a Jew, which would have been unthinkable, she forces Jesus to grow in his understanding of divine love.

Jesus is said to be the embodiment of love and compassion. Yet left on his own, he was unwilling to exercise compassion. The fulfillment of his own destiny was only possible because of his ability to learn from the 'other'. This is a hard lesson. Most of us, even the most pure, even the son of god, are oppressive. To mature, to fulfill our own natures we must accept it and learn from it when we are called to task by those we devalue. The oppressor can only be made whole by accepting the oppressed. The men will only be healed by the women, the straights will only be healed by the gays, the whites will only be healed by the people of color, and the Christians will only be healed by the pagans.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

29 OCTOBER — Father Frank Cordaro is released from prison after serving six months for crossing the line at Strategic Air Command.

4 NOVEMBER — House Blessing and Welcome Home for Father Frank, 4-7 pm. Father Frank will bless the Bishop Dingman House, open house before and after. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.



# HOW MUCH HAPPENS IN A DAY

In the course of a day, we shall meet one another.

But, in one day, things spring up—  
they sell grapes in the street,  
tomatoes change their skin,  
the young girl you fancied  
did not come back to the office.

They changed the postman suddenly.  
The letters now are not the same.  
A few golden leaves and it's changed;  
this tree is now rich.

Who would have said that the earth  
with its ancient skin would change so much?  
It has more volcanoes than yesterday,  
the sky has new clouds,  
the rivers are flowing differently.  
Besides, so much has come into being!  
I have inaugurated hundreds  
of highways and buildings,  
delicate, clean bridges  
like ships or violins.

And so, when I greet you  
and kiss your flowering mouth,  
our kisses are other kisses,  
our mouths are new mouths.

Joy, my love, joy in all things,  
what falls and what flourishes.

Joy in today and yesterday,  
the day before and tomorrow.

Joy in bread and stone,  
in fire and in rain.

In what changes, is born, grows,  
consumes itself, and becomes a kiss again.

Joy in the air we have,  
and in what we have of earth.

When our life has dried up,  
only the roots remain to us,  
and the wind is cold like hate.

Then let us change our skin,  
our nails, our blood, our gazing;  
you kiss me and I go out  
to sell light on the roads.

Joy in the night and the day,  
and the four stations of the soul.

Pablo Neruda

**Non-Profit organization**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Permit 22**  
**Des Moines, Iowa**

**Via Pacis**  
**DMCW -- / Diocese of Des Moines**  
**Box 4551-- Box 1816**  
**Des Moines, IA 50306**

**Address Correction requested**